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FEATURES — EVENTS

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026 . 11:13 AM — 4 min read

Students rehearse for Winchester High School’s production of ‘Chicago: Teen Edition.' COURTESY PHOTO/VALENTINA CELLA

By Talia Ho | Correspondent

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Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz.

This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s.

Performances will take place on March 13 and 14 at 7 p.m., and March 15 at 2 p.m. The show runs approximately two hours and 15 minutes, including one intermission.

Supervised by creative director Valentina Cella, the production brings the Broadway story to life in an edition specifically adapted for younger audiences.

The orchestra works with student actors for the upcoming production of ‘Chicago: Teen Edition,’ running March 13-15. COURTESY PHOTO/VALENTINA CELLA

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"'Chicago' is a classic!" said Cella. "This adapted version allows us to perform the show while maintaining its iconic charm, sharp humor, and show-stopping numbers."

Cella oversees every aspect of the production, while Joel Buford serves as vocal director and Nick Costello directs the orchestra. Nate Morrissey and Cole Rabe, two WHS alumni, supported Cella with the technical aspects of the production.

Students play a role in nearly every facet of the show, from running backstage during performances to assisting with props, costumes, set, lighting, sound, and rehearsal logistics.

Rehearsals take place every afternoon, requiring dedication and consistency from its 28 cast members.

This year's production places particular emphasis on dance, with choreography designed by WHS alum Aliza Franz, now a professional dancer based in Boston. Because of the show's dance-heavy nature, casting decisions required evaluation of each student's dancing abilities alongside vocal and performance skills.

Cella's creative vision centers on the "show with a show" concept, immersing the audience in the world of 1920s vaudeville. Rather than relying on elaborate scenery, the production will feature a minimalist set with dramatic lighting and intentional choreography. The curtain will only close at intermission to reinforce the feeling of one continuous performance.

"Movement and choreography drive much of the storytelling," explained Cella. "Precision, sharpness, and confidence in performance style will be essential."

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GIRL SHOT BY EMPLOYER WHEN SHE DEMANDS PAY
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Want Ad Index Page 20

A mock up of a newspaper announcing Roxie Hart’s take over of Chicago for the WHS production of ‘Chicago: Teen Edition.’ COURTESY PHOTO/VALENTINA CELLA

Senior Priscilla Meyer, who plays lead character Roxie Hart, looks forward to balancing Roxie’s charisma with her moral ambiguity.

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"Roxie is powerful but not the most noble character," Meyer said. "I'm excited to make her fun and lovable amidst her moral darkness."

Meyer began her theater journey as a small Who in "Seussical." Since then, she's found musical theater to be "a place where I can combine my passions." She also emphasizes the importance of staying physically and mentally healthy during the demanding rehearsal process.

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Junior Viviana Cella plays Velma Kelly, one of the show's central characters. She is particularly excited to perform iconic numbers like "All That Jazz" and "Cell Block Tango."

"Velma is strong, confident, and complex," she said. "The dancing is intense and stylized, which makes the role both challenging and exciting."

Cella has been involved in both school productions and outside programs, including jazz and contemporary dance classes.

Another important aspect of performing is understanding the character's emotional layers.

"I think a lot about Velma's motivations, especially the difference between how she presents herself versus what she might actually be feeling," said Cella.

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Rehearsals continue at WHS for the upcoming production of 'Chicago: Teen Edition.' COURTESY PHOTO/VALENTINA CELLA

Freshman Max Bondarenko takes on the role of Billy Flynn, the charismatic defense attorney who turns murder trials into media spectacles. Bondarenko has performed in musical theater since he was in first grade at the Winchester Cooperative Theater.

He is excited to play a leading role in his first year of high school theater and looks forward to exploring Flynn's layered personality.

"He [Flynn] is caring at some points but arrogant at others, which gives some fun variety," said Bondarenko.

To prepare, he rehearses his lines nightly, practices with family and cast members, and listens repeatedly to the music to build familiarity.

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Junior Jackson Slubowski, playing Amos Hart, is eager to portray a more emotional role.

"I'm trying to invoke sympathy from the audience," he said.

Slubowski has been involved in musical theater, particularly in more comedic roles, since eighth grade. So portraying Amos' strong emotions will be a welcome challenge for Slubowski.

Sophomore Josie McCabe plays Mary Sunshine, a kind yet comedic reporter. McCabe uses a memorizing trick to learn her lines. She records voice memos of the other lines in a scene, then plays the recordings over until the scene is memorized.

Matron "Mama" Morton," played by Junior Sophia Barbosa, is another energy-filled character. Barbosa says she focuses on Morton's "sass, power, and strong stage presence," to do the iconic character justice.

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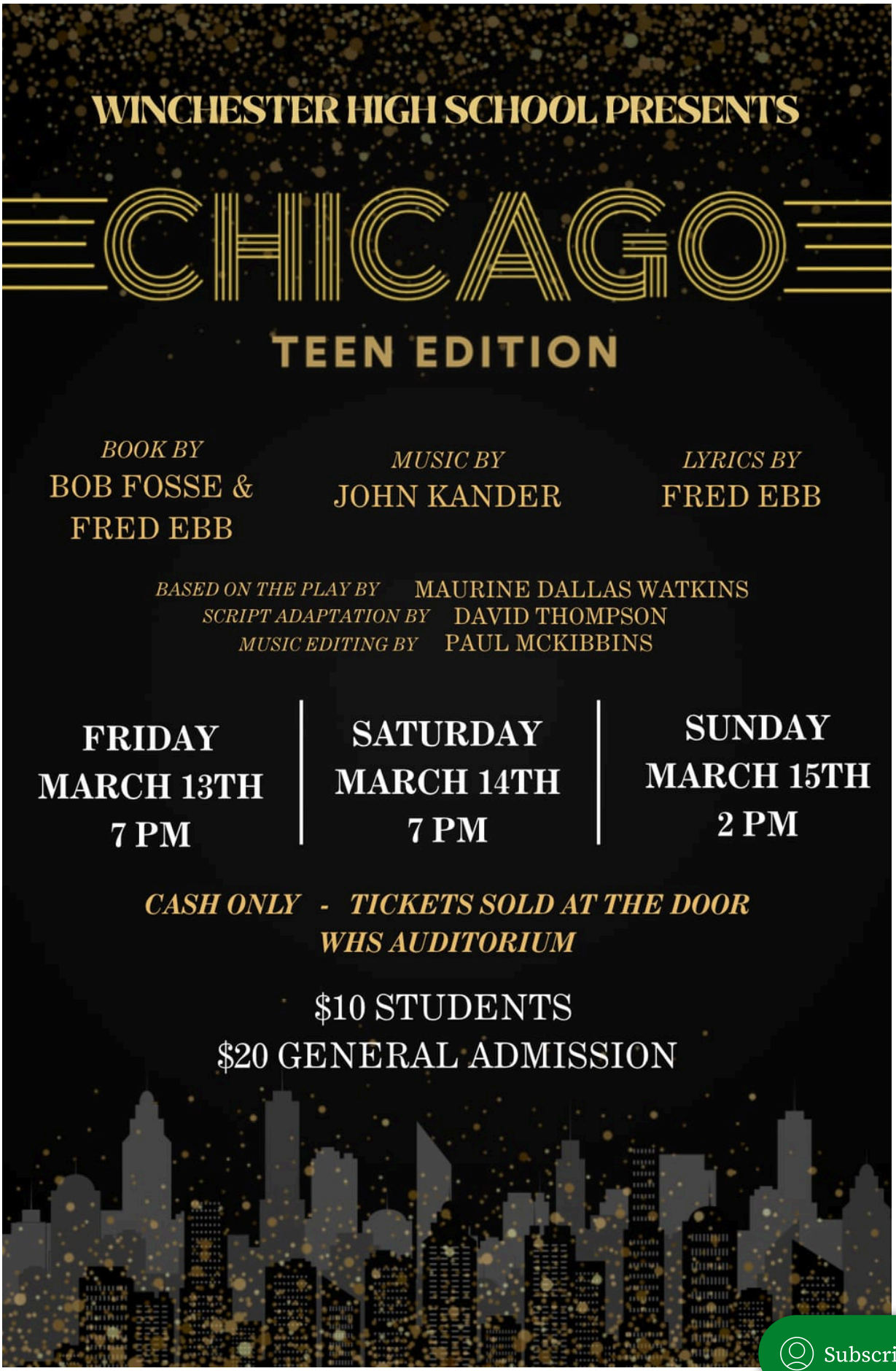

The flyer for the ‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ musical at Winchester High School. COURTESY PHOTO/VALENTINA CELLA

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Beyond the spotlight, the months of daily rehearsals have created a strong sense of community among the cast. From long afternoons in the auditorium perfecting choreography together, students consistently pointed to the friendships and camaraderie as one of the most meaningful parts of the process.

"I'm most looking forward to the time and effort that we will all put into the creation of this amazing show," Bondarenko said, "as well as the great memories that we make along the way with this cast."

Don't miss the chance to see the sharp satire, high-energy dance numbers, and celebration of school spirit on March 13, 14 and 15.

Tickets can be purchased at the door of the WHS auditorium for $20, general admission, or $10 for students. Cash only.

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FEATURES

Celebrating Black history and culture with art, reflection, and community

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the enduring legacy of Black

March 3, 2026

FEATURES

Winchester residents share more snow photos

Well, Winchester, we made it through the weekend with only a coating of snow that amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 blizzard, Winchester News once again asked residents to send their snow photos. And here is what we received! Solmaz Amirnazmi said her daughters and

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

March 2, 2026

FEATURES

Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols

FEATURES

Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence hosting 23rd Trivia Bee

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Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

February 26, 2026

Winchester's brightest fifth graders and adults will gather soon to compete in a fierce trivia competition that will raise money for Winchester schools. The Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence (WFEE), a nonprofit that provides grants for Winchester's public schools, will host its 23rd annual trivia bee March 11

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

February 24, 2026

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EVENTS

Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

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